

SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS POLICY

NEED FOR POLICY – Rationale & scope

The purpose of the SEN policy is to facilitate the meaningful inclusion of, and provision for, students with special educational needs in our school, in line with our school ethos and legal demands, and for the benefit of all the partners in education.

We promote an inclusive school environment in ethos and practice, endeavouring to provide a full education in line with the varied and diverse needs of all our students, welcoming all such students as part of our school community and recognising the extra support they require in a mainstream setting.

In Pobalscoil Na Tríonóide, a special need student is any student who has difficulty coping with the mainstream curriculum and/or school environment due to assessed specific or general learning difficulties; assessed syndromes; physical disabilities; emotional/behavioural disorders, or who raises concerns due to persistent lack of progress, either academically or behaviourally, in school.

We need a policy to formally state and record the school's position and provision for students with SEN; to clearly guide whole school practice and to satisfy legal requirements.

The policy will be formulated by the Board of Management; the Principal and Deputy Principal; the SEN Co-ordinators and team; the Guidance team and mainstream teacher representatives.

The content of the policy will be decided by the aforementioned, guided by current legislative provisions and DES guidelines and current school provision.

VALUE OF POLICY – Link to Mission, Vision, & Aims

Our school Mission Statement promotes the ethos of inclusion which informs our policy and provision for students with SEN. It stresses that “TOGETHER” we value learning, progress and achievement at every level, and nurture community.

We have an established SEN Department in our school, specifically to address issues and provisions relating to students with SEN. The SEN co-ordinators work closely with all those involved internally and externally in providing for the education and welfare of all students with SEN in Pobalscoil Na Tríonóide. Parents and subject teachers may refer students about whom they have concerns to the SEN team and discuss these concerns. Further action (assessment, extra help etc, as appropriate) may be agreed upon in consultation with parents/guardians and advice/support given to teachers.

The SEN Co-ordinator is a core member of the Pastoral Care Team, liaising closely with Guidance, the School Chaplain, Deputy Principal and Principal, as well as Year Heads and Class Tutors. The SNA Team works in close co-operation with the SEN Co-ordinator, Deputy Principal and Guidance.

The SEN Co-ordinator maintains close links with outside agencies such as the National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS); the Special Educational Needs Officer (SENO) at the National Council for Special Education (NCSE); The Child Guidance Clinic and appropriate specialists.

The school’s ability to respond to students with SEN is informed by the needs of the student in the first instance; the experience, understanding and knowledge of the school staff at all levels; the support of school management; the allocation of resources from the Department of Education and the NCSE; the provision of resources, within the school; the support, guidance and co-operation of outside agencies such as NEPS and others involved with the students or the school; the support and co-operation of students’ parents/guardians with provisions put in place.

DESIRED OUTCOMES – Goals/objectives

The objectives of this policy are:

1. To establish the best practice and provision for students with SEN in our school, in line with our Mission Statement
2. To ensure the school's inclusive ethos is facilitated
3. To clarify for all the partners in education the ethos and procedures relating to SEN provision in our school

MEASURES TO ACHIEVE – Content

Students with SEN are identified in the following ways:

1. Standardised entrance assessment tests
2. Consultation with feeder schools prior to entering our school
3. Needs noted on school Enrolment Form
4. Parental referral to the SEN Dept., prior to or following school enrolment
5. Psychological/Occupational Therapy/Speech and Language Reports submitted with enrolment form or subsequently
6. Documented evidence of on-going difficulties or lack of progress in school
7. Pastoral/Year Head/Tutor/Subject teacher/Guidance/Management referral
8. SNA Team observation and monitoring
9. Further in-house standardised testing and/or use of checklists to establish possibility of SEN, following referrals outlined above and with parental/guardian permission
10. Review of results and possible referral to outside agencies, eg NEPS, following consultation with parents/guardians, and school management.

The progress of students with SEN may be assessed in a variety of ways, according to their specific and individual needs and provisions:

1. Standardised testing is carried out twice yearly to assess academic progress as appropriate in Learning Support or Resource classes
2. Informal and formal teacher observation and feedback
3. Academic progress in mainstream subjects is assessed in formal subject tests and exams at appointed times during the school year. Year Heads/ subject teachers feedback any concerns raised
4. Parental feedback
5. SNA feedback, informal and formally to SEN Co-ordinator School attendance/retention, where appropriate
6. Level of student integration, where relevant

The SEN Co-ordinators maintain individual files for each student with recognised SEN or referred to the department for review. All confidential material including but not restricted to assessment results, psychological and other specialist reports, is held in these files. Results, meetings and information relating to the students are also recorded and the information is used to review and evaluate the students' ongoing progress, as well as inform future provisions.

SEN teachers maintain their own records and files of the students they teach, including results and observations which assist in reviewing progress and determining how the needs of the students are best met.

CURRICULUM ACCESS

Students with SEN are offered full access to the same curriculum as all students. To support that access, SEN teachers offer individualised support during Resource and/or Learning Support to address subject specific issues or needs the students may have, as well as general literacy skills.

Resource teachers may be allocated to students specifically to support their progress in a particular subject or subjects identified as problematic by the

student and teachers/parents in order to facilitate their continued access to such subjects.

In Learning Support, teachers focus on literacy skills in particular to support curricular access.

The integration and mainstreaming of students with SEN is facilitated by pre-entry preparation and consultation in conjunction with the First Year Head; all students are placed in mixed ability mainstream classes in Junior Cycle, with subsequent banding in Maths and Irish. SNA support may be provided initially where possible and they are active at break times to facilitate and encourage integration socially.

Provision is made on an individual basis to address specific needs or difficulties which may hamper integration, eg social skills or physical difficulties.

Differentiation is encouraged in mainstream subject classes to facilitate students with SEN. It is the responsibility of all subject teachers to provide for students with SEN in the classroom.

Students with laptops or other devices are facilitated to enable them to access the curriculum. Data or overhead projectors and computers are available to support teachers and students.

PROVISIONS

A variety of provisions are made for students with SEN, depending on individual needs and entitlement: reduced curriculum; Learning Support classes; Resource one-to-one or in small groups; behavioural support, etc. These are not prescriptive; provision for support is determined on an individual basis by the team supporting the student, with input from the parents/guardians and student involved. The emphasis is always on integrating and supporting the student in mainstream classes as far as possible.

The SEN Co-ordinators liaise with parents and outside agencies, as and when necessary. Contact may be initiated by any of the education partners. Parents or external agencies may ring school and request a call or meeting with the Co-ordinators, to be arranged at mutually convenient times.

Meetings with parents are also arranged in conjunction with Guidance, Year Heads, the Deputy Principal and Principal as and when appropriate. Joint feedback or team meetings comprising of various personnel, including SNAs, may be held prior or post-psychological or other assessment, or at other times, for the purposes of co-ordinating provisions for the student.

Contact with external agencies is maintained by the SEN Co-ordinators, Guidance Counsellors, Deputy Principal or Principal, as appropriate, for advice, support and resources to adequately meet the needs of students with SEN.

Parental involvement, support and consultation is actively encouraged in Pobalscoil Na Tríonóide.

All teachers involved in SEN are encouraged to keep a list of their students' teachers and subjects, as well as other SEN personnel working with them, and to collaborate with them in supporting student learning. Mainstream teachers are also encouraged to liaise with the SEN

Dept and teachers involved in delivering Learning Support and Resource when they feel specific areas need to be addressed. SEN teachers have a flexible approach to supporting teaching and learning.

Necessary Resources

We need:

- Literacy and Numeracy materials to support students with SEN: these need to be reviewed and updated periodically
- Trained and/or enthusiastic SEN teachers, to work with the students
- IT software and access to facilitate student access to the curriculum and develop their IT, literacy and/or numeracy skills
- Facilities, eg rooms for teaching, centralised storage and monitoring of resource materials , secure storage for confidential files
- A clearly identifiable agreed, student-centred set of procedures and systems governing practice re SEN in the school, which is reviewed periodically and amended as necessary

- Whole staff training and professional development re inclusion and differentiation in the mainstream classroom, specific also to their subject areas
- Time for training and in-school support of teachers new to SEN
- School support for teachers wishing to engage in continuing professional development on a personal level
- School support for teacher membership of professional organisations
- An SNA team to support students with particular care needs, to enable them to access the curriculum and fully partake in school life with their peers
- Time for meetings of SEN Core Team; planning and review meetings for SEN teachers with Co-ordinators, Year Head, etc.

In-house Resources to support students with SEN are available from the Resource room: teachers are welcome to access these resources, following procedures for borrowing and returning them, as laid down by the SEN Dept. Funding for resource materials may be obtained on request from the Principal

DATA-GATHERING AND ANALYSIS

In conjunction with parents/guardians, the student and relevant personnel, the SEN team sets short and long term targets based on agreed outcomes defined in assessments and with due regard to students' strengths and needs. The immediate needs of the student inform these provisions, eg state exams.

To assist with meeting the needs of the student, a core practice of data gathering and analysis needs to be established. All students are assessed on first entering the school, using the standardised assessment tests, as laid out earlier in this document. The results are reviewed by the SEN team in conjunction with the Year Head, Principal, Deputy Principal or other relevant personnel, as well as all other necessary information.

All students receiving SEN support are re-assessed twice yearly by their teachers, using the standardised tests, and results recorded to assist with future provisions for the student. Teachers are given instructions and

practices around testing and recording/reviewing of results are monitored by the SEN core team.

Teacher feedback and in-class monitoring is regularly sought re student strengths, areas of difficulty etc. Such methods raise teacher awareness of the processes involved and encourage the development of core practices.

Inclusive teaching skills in the school are encouraged by:

- Mixed ability classes
- Gathering and making available suitable reference material for teachers promoting and assisting the development of inclusive and differentiated methods of teaching generally and in their subject areas
- Developing an inclusive homework and assessment policy
- Ongoing support of personal and whole staff professional development
- SEN team support on a personal and/or subject department level promoting inclusive teaching skills.

Information about students with SEN is posted on the SEN or Pastoral notice board in the Staffroom using the confidential envelope system: it is the responsibility of mainstream subject teachers to ensure they periodically check the board for new or updated information and to seek further advice from the Year Heads or SEN Co-ordinators.

Basic information regarding students' needs and suggested provisions in the mainstream classroom for students with SEN are available in the Staffroom and Resource room. Teachers regularly consult the SEN Dept for further guidance and support.

Reminders, alerts and general notices about SEN for the staff are posted on E-Portal and/or the SEN staffroom noticeboard, as appropriate.

The SEN Co-ordinators work closely with the Year Heads and Guidance Team to facilitate the dissemination of information to teachers. Each teacher also has a postbox and individual messages may be delivered there to reach the teacher directly.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The Principal and Board of Management are responsible for ensuring the policy is implemented. The SEN Co-ordinators may monitor the implementation of the policy under the guidance of the Principal, Deputy Principal and BOM.

The SEN Co-ordinators and Department in conjunction with the Principal and Deputy Principal will maintain the SEN register. This will record the names of all students with identified SEN in the school, their specific difficulties, ATS hours and other resources granted by the SENO, and certified Irish Exemptions.

Relevant information regarding responsibilities for SEN provision is given directly to the Principal, who informs the Board of Management.

Parents and students responsibilities are communicated to them directly in meetings with SEN teachers, the Principal and Deputy Principal and other agencies such as NEPS.

Staff are informed and reminded of their responsibilities via meetings, guidelines available for consultation in the staffroom and Resource room; the information about students given on the SEN noticeboard and on E-Portal, and on a personal level.

The SEN core team are available for help, support and guidance in the fulfilment of these responsibilities. Information leaflets, books and other reference material is available for staff, parents/guardians and students to consult as required.

MONITORING, REVIEW & EVALUATION

The Principal and the Board of Management are responsible for ensuring that the SEN policy is being implemented. The SEN Dept. may monitor the general implementation of the policy under the guidance of the Principal, the Deputy Principal and the BOM.

The policy will be reviewed and evaluated annually on a general basis, and any proposed amendments forwarded to the BOM.

It shall be reviewed and evaluated re individual students on an ongoing basis, as appropriate, but not less than once a year.

The SEN Dept, in consultation with other staff members and school management, is responsible for conducting the review and evaluation of the policy.

Progress is evaluated formally and informally, with due reference to the individual difficulties of the student. The methods include but are not limited to: mainstream and SEN teacher observation and evaluation; SNA observation and feedback; parental feedback re progress; formal school exams to indicate academic progress; ongoing standardised assessment in Learning Support and/or Resource.

It is the responsibility of the Principal and the Board of Management to ensure that the SEN policy is compliant with current legislation and non-discriminatory.